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Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1436 (2002) of 24 September 2002, in which the Council urged the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) to complete, within eight months, the first and second phases of the Mission's drawdown plan, as presented in my fifteenth report (S/2002/987) of 5 September 2002. The Council also requested me to report on the progress made and the planning of subsequent phases, and to make any necessary recommendations. By the same resolution, the Security Council authorized the deployment of up to 170 civilian police in UNAMSIL and requested me to provide updates on their deployment. The present report provides the requested updates, and contains an assessment of the progress made towards achieving the key security benchmarks set out in my fifteenth report concerning the overall efforts to consolidate peace in Sierra Leone.

II. Security situation

2. The overall political and security situation in Sierra Leone remained generally stable during much of the reporting period, albeit volatile on the Liberian border. This overall stability has facilitated the process of gradual peace consolidation and the implementation of some of the principal benchmarks described in my fifteenth report. However, a number of alarming developments have been reported in early 2003. In particular, on 13 January 2003 the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) Wellington barracks armory in East Freetown was attacked by a group of former soldiers and some civilians, whose intention was to steal a large quantity of weapons. The attack was unsuccessful due to resistance offered by RSLAF staff and preventive measures taken by the Sierra Leone police.

3. The ongoing investigation by the Sierra Leone police into the attack has uncovered a plan involving ex-combatants and some serving soldiers aimed at destabilizing the State authority and creating conditions in which the Special Court established by an Agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone pursuant to Security Council resolution 1315 (2000) of 14 August 2000 might be unable to discharge its mandate. Johnny Paul Koroma, the former Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) leader, and later Chairman of the Peace and

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Liberation Party and a Member of Parliament, was implicated in the plot and declared wanted in connection with it. During an attempt by the Sierra Leone police to arrest him, Mr. Koroma managed to escape from his house under circumstances that have yet to be clarified, and has remained at large.

4. Meanwhile, about 100 other suspects have been detained thus far. Charges have been brought against 16 of them. It is widely believed that these incidents were to a considerable degree connected with the beginning of the functioning of the Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Though many of the ex-Civil Defence Force (CDF) and ex-Revolutionary United Front (RUF) combatants have come to terms with the reality of the Court, those of them who fear indictments appear to be seeking to frustrate the process.

5. In this connection, it is important to mention that on 10 March the Prosecutor of the Special Court made a public statement in which he announced that indictments had been brought against former RUF, AFRC, West Side Boys, and CDF leaders, namely, Foday Sankoh, Johnny Paul Koroma, Sam Bockarie, Issa Sesay, Alex Brima, Moris Kallon and Sam Hinga Norman. All of the indictees except for Koroma and Bockarie are currently in custody. The crimes alleged in the indictments include, among others, murder, rape, extermination, acts of terror, enslavement, looting and burning, sexual slavery, conscription of children into an armed force and attacks on UNAMSIL peacekeepers and humanitarian workers.

6. On 10 January, some 70 Liberian combatants believed to be members of Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) crossed the border into Sierra Leone and attacked the village of Mandavulahun in the Kailahun Salient. The RSLAF troops from the 8th Battalion that were deployed in the area retreated, leaving behind some of their equipment.

7. The incidents mentioned above affected the confidence of the public in the security of the State. They appeared to have lent credence to the feeling that RSLAF and the Sierra Leone police still need considerable training.

8. Some other trends highlighted in my previous reports seem to have persisted. In spite of the Government's undertaking, at the Consultative Group meeting held on 13 and 14 November 2002 in Paris, to disband all CDF structures, no progress has been made in this regard. Instead, some CDF leaders have been clamouring for the transformation of CDF into a territorial defence force. In a symptomatic development, the re-emerged Civil Defence Union has been propagating negative information about the Government's ability to handle security.

9. At the same time, the large numbers of unemployed youths, mainly concentrated in urban and mining centres throughout the country, present another long-term issue. In addition to being a security problem, they are regularly interfering in diamond mining. Some youth groups appear to enjoy political patronage, and the Sierra Leone police seem to be reluctant or unable to challenge the undermining of State authority by these groups, especially in Koidu and Tongo fields in the eastern region.

III. Implementation of the drawdown plan

10. In my sixteenth report on UNAMSIL (S/2002/1417) of 24 December 2002, I provided details on the progress made in the implementation of the first two phases

of the Mission's drawdown plan. The first phase, which started in September 2002, was completed in November 2002 with the withdrawal of some 600 troops from the Bangladeshi and Nigerian contingents, as well as reconnaissance helicopters that were considered no longer essential. The implementation of the second drawdown phase, which envisages the withdrawal of 3,900 troops, is still in progress. In December 2002 and January 2003, the Pakistani artillery unit, the Ghanaian headquarters sector 3 staff and the Kenyan sector 2 staff were repatriated, which allowed the Mission to reduce the force strength from 16,000 to 15,500. Simultaneously, the five military sectors were reduced to three.

11. The next stage of the second phase of the drawdown commenced in March with the repatriation of the Bangladeshi logistic battalion and a reduction in the strength of the Bangladeshi signals battalion. This phase will continue with the repatriation of the Nigerian contingent based at Goderich, near Freetown, the Guinean battalion and the Ghanaian level-2 hospital, to be completed in May 2003. The force strength will thereby be reduced to 13,000 troops.

12. The completion of phase 2 will be followed by a period of review and consolidation of United Nations positions. However, planning for phase 3 of the drawdown is already at an advanced stage. That phase will run from August 2003 to the end of 2004; it is envisaged that the strength of the force will be reduced further, from 13,000 to about 5,000. That very substantial reduction will obviously be closely linked to the achievement of critical benchmarks established by the Security Council, most significant among which remains the capacity of the Sierra Leone police and RSLAF to maintain security. The risks inherent in the implementation of this phase are recognized to be much greater than those during phase 2, and the UNAMSIL operational plan is being worked out accordingly.

13. In this phase, the force will progressively be concentrated in the Freetown and Lungi peninsulas in the west, and the Tongo and Kono diamond-mining areas and the Liberian border region in the east, with commensurate and staged repatriation of force elements in the central region. At the final stage of this phase, the remaining troops will be concentrated exclusively in Freetown. The military observers, however, will remain at the current level and will remain active across the entire country.

14. UNAMSIL expects to implement phase 3 in several steps, each to be followed by a careful assessment of the prevailing security situation. Step one envisages a reduction of force troops from 13,000 to 12,300; sector centre's Nigerian battalion will repatriate from its base in Makeni by August 2003 on completion of its six-month tour, with sub-units from the Bangladeshi battalion at Magburaka relocating to Makeni if so required. During step two, the number of troops is expected to be reduced to 11,500, after the Bangladeshi battalion has been repatriated on completion of its eight-month tour in November 2003, with another Bangladeshi battalion providing back-up as required. It will be important to retain the attack-and-support helicopter assets in the theatre throughout phase 3, to provide the necessary monitoring and deterrence along Sierra Leone's borders and to enforce peace if required. The support helicopters will be used to deploy the rapid force reserve in support of the Sierra Leone police or army in areas vacated by UNAMSIL as may be necessary.

IV. Strengthening the security sector

15. In paragraph 4 of its resolution 1436 (2002), the Security Council stipulated that the implementation of the UNAMSIL drawdown plan should be guided by an evaluation of the security situation in the country and a review of the capacity of the Sierra Leone security sector to take responsibility for internal and external security. The joint mechanisms established by UNAMSIL and the Government of Sierra Leone, which include an integrated planning group and joint meetings of senior UNAMSIL military officers and the National Security Coordination Group, have met regularly to take stock of the prevailing security conditions. The Steering Committee that coordinates the efforts to strengthen the Sierra Leone police and comprises the Sierra Leone police, UNAMSIL and the Commonwealth police advisers and is chaired by the Inspector General of the Sierra Leone police, also meets regularly.

A. Sierra Leone police

16. The efforts of the Sierra Leone Government, UNAMSIL and the Commonwealth Safety and Security Project to strengthen the capacity of the Sierra Leone police have focused on increasing the size and capacity of the police force by recruiting and training new cadets, improving their policing skills and planning for their deployment, in conjunction with the drawdown of UNAMSIL. A key constraint to expanding the police force remains, however, the limited capacity of the Police Training School at Hastings. The Government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will soon increase the capacity of the school to 320 cadets through joint funding for the rehabilitation of premises. To meet the immediate need for the school's expansion, UNAMSIL has offered to lend some containers, which will soon be set up as classrooms. The Sierra Leone police currently have sufficient reserve candidates to fill the next class, in April 2003. They are also confident of meeting the subsequent envisaged goal of recruiting approximately 1,000 new officers in 2003.

17. In recent days, UNAMSIL has discovered, after verifying the number of officers on the payroll, that the current level of the Sierra Leone police may be as low as 6,053, as opposed to a previously reported level of approximately 7,000 serving officers. Furthermore, the annual attrition rate may be up to 500 officers per year. Therefore, in order to reach the projected strength of 9,500 officers by 2005, up to 1,600 new cadets should be recruited per year between 2003 and 2005. This would require both doubling the current capacity of the Police Training School and a major recruitment drive. The Sierra Leone police have yet to confirm their estimated requirements. Until then, the strength of 9,500 officers remains a planning figure. However, these new findings stress the immediate need for additional donor support to rehabilitate the Police Training School at Hastings, as well as a review of the recruitment strategy.

18. The establishment of the joint strategy to support training has paved the way for the deployment of the United Nations civilian police trainers. UNAMSIL and the Secretariat are presently conducting assessments in potential contributing countries to identify the best candidates for the Mission. Unfortunately, despite strenuous efforts, the recruitment has been hampered by a paucity of well-qualified candidates in required professions.

19. So far, 64 civilian police officers have been deployed, while another 31 officers are to arrive before the end of March 2003. The officers recruited have been deployed to all Sierra Leone police divisions. At the same time, United Nations mentors are working closely with the Sierra Leone police in the implementation of the local needs policing concept jointly developed with the Commonwealth advisers. This has contributed to a noticeable increase in the confidence of the public in the police throughout the country. The Steering Committee has recently recommended the deployment of 30 more civilian police trainers.

20. Simultaneously, the Sierra Leone police and UNAMSIL are jointly developing a deployment plan aimed at the reinforcement of the police presence, based on risk analysis and policing needs, in areas to be vacated by UNAMSIL during its drawdown. The plan will indicate specific numbers of Sierra Leone police officers to be deployed within each district, supported by an assessment of infrastructure and logistical needs in the various locations, and make reference to the deployment of officers from the Operations Support Division, the armed wing of the Sierra Leone police.

21. The plan obviously has personnel, budgetary and logistical implications that will require close monitoring to ensure that its objectives are met. It hinges in particular on the support that the Sierra Leone police will be able to mobilize to acquire necessary infrastructure and equipment, in particular in terms of mobility and communications.

22. Also, the United Nations policy and planning adviser and chief training adviser have been deployed. A diamond-mining policing adviser, a cross-border policing adviser and an airport policing adviser are being identified to assist the Sierra Leone police in these critical areas.

B. Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces

23. The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces continue to improve gradually their effectiveness as a result of training and considerable restructuring support from the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT), led by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The restructuring, which should result in the reduction of the force from its current strength of approximately 14,000 to about 10,500, has commenced. Its Joint Force Command has been restructured into three regionally based brigades, a Freetown garrison and a maritime wing. In an attempt to address infrastructure problems, a short-term initiative to address the barracks shortage currently faced by RSLAF has started, with financial assistance from the United Kingdom. However, with a third of RSLAF troops continually deployed in Sierra Leone-Liberia border areas, their sustainability remains a source of serious concern. Plans are under way to establish permanent garrisons in the heartland from which operational deployments to the border can be mounted. Along with the ongoing restructuring, this is expected to create a more capable, albeit smaller army.

24. The joint UNAMSIL and RSLAF border operations — including helicopter gunship patrols for deterrence — were intensified during the reporting period. On his visit to sector east on 15 February, the UNAMSIL Force Commander observed that the security of the area around Mandavulahun had improved due to the presence of RSLAF and UNAMSIL regular patrols. It was also noted that the refugees

crossing at the Mano River Bridge were being expeditiously processed. The serious logistic and capacity shortfalls of RSLAF and the Sierra Leone police have been ameliorated to some extent by the provision of UNAMSIL helicopters to dispatch their reinforcements in a timely fashion. Also, the two agencies have increasingly been engaged in joint activities in response to the current security concerns in Freetown.

25. Current operations, however, are hindered by the lamentable state of the RSLAF vehicle fleet and the paucity of communications equipment. In a welcome demonstration of support, some 300 British troops arrived in Sierra Leone on 22 February to conduct joint military exercises with RSLAF and to support IMATT. The aim of the deployment is to demonstrate a continued commitment to the peace process in Sierra Leone on the part of the United Kingdom, as well as to provide a valuable training opportunity for both the British troops and RSLAF. The arrival of the force has been received extremely well by the local media and the populace.

26. As I have stressed in my previous reports, the situation at the Liberia border continues to pose a threat to the security and stability of Sierra Leone. During the period under review, in addition to the Mandavulahun village incident described above, raids by armed Liberians searching for food in Sierra Leonean villages continued. With LURD stepping up its campaign in Liberia, there has been an upsurge in the number of military deserters and refugees seeking sanctuary in Sierra Leone. Some 300 members of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) surrendered to RSLAF during the reporting period and are now among other ex-combatants interned at a camp at Mapeh, created and run by the Government to accommodate combatants fleeing from either LURD or Government forces. During the reporting period there have been a number of meetings between RSLAF and Liberian officials in order to exchange information on the situation in the border areas. Sierra Leone officials also had contacts with LURD, encouraging them to commence peace negotiations with the Liberian Government.

V. Peace consolidation

A. Consolidating State authority

27. There has been progress in consolidating State authority throughout the country. The full deployment of Government officials to all districts by March 2003 has almost been completed. Additionally, the process of filling the 61 vacant posts of paramount chiefs, which commenced on 2 December 2002, was successfully concluded on 24 January 2004. In order to promote local governance through decentralization, the Government has begun plans to devolve powers to the districts. A Task Force on Local Government Reform and Decentralization, chaired by the Vice-President, has been established for this purpose and is expected to become operational in March. Elections for new municipal and district councils are planned to take place before the end of the year.

28. The district recovery committees, established to spearhead recovery efforts at the local level, are now operational in most districts. In order to monitor the progress of the recovery efforts on the ground, the National Recovery Committee, involving donors, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, has decided to hold its monthly meetings at the district level.

29. It should be noted, however, that the consolidation of State authority in Sierra Leone is still hampered by major logistic and infrastructural constraints. Many of the returning officials lack the basic facilities for the discharge of their functions. Travel between Freetown and the district headquarters is difficult, particularly during the rainy season. These constraints should be overcome as soon as possible so as to lay a solid foundation for longer-term programmes designed to strengthen local government and encourage decentralization.

B. Reintegration of ex-combatants

30. The Government continues to make progress with the programme to offer reintegration opportunities to registered ex-combatants. The National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration estimates the remaining caseload of those awaiting inclusion in the programme at 14,700. Special attention has recently been given to accelerating programme delivery in critical districts with large outstanding caseloads, including Kailahun, Kono, Bo, Moyamba and Pujehun. The National Committee and its working partners envisage that the reintegration opportunities programme could possibly be completed by the end of 2003.

31. The programme itself remains seriously underfunded. However, considerable support has been received from Japan through recent contributions to the Department for International Development (DFID)-managed community rehabilitation programme and to the United Nations Human Security Fund, managed by UNAMSIL and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). With additional opportunities provided by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the East, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the area of reunification and the reintegration of child ex-combatants, the projected shortfall in the Multi-Donor Trust Fund managed by the World Bank is currently estimated at approximately $6 million.

32. The achievement of the long-term goal of reintegrating ex-combatants into communities will largely depend on prospects for economic recovery. The future of ex-combatants, in this regard, is very much linked to that of other youth in Sierra Leone. Provided that economic recovery can be sustained, youth empowerment and engagement programmes, such as the ones promoted by the National Youth Policy, developed by the Ministry of Youth, have great potential to enhance the stability of the country.

C. Restoration of Government control over diamond mining

33. The restoration of effective Government control over the country's mineral resources, particularly diamond mining, remains an area of critical importance for the future of the country. Despite some progress achieved by the Government in this area, basic concerns of the international community remain. Following the end of the disarmament process, more than 1,000 diamond-mining licences have been issued in 44 chiefdoms. On a positive note, in 2002 official exports of diamonds increased to $41 million, from about $26 million in the preceding year. New diamond deposits have been discovered in Port Loko, Kambia and Kamakwie, and

diamond mining, including mechanized mining, is on the increase. Kimberlite mining is expected to resume in Kono district later in 2003.

34. However, uncontrolled illegal diamond-mining activity in various parts of the country and consequent illicit trade through unofficial channels persist, though no accurate data are available in this regard. In some areas youth groups are seeking to exercise de facto control over mining, in defiance of State authority. Diamond trading is yet to be adequately regulated. These factors constitute a continuing long-term threat, and UNAMSIL remains the principal guarantor of stability in the main diamond-producing areas.

35. The Government of Sierra Leone has launched, with co-financing by UNDP, a Diamonds for Development initiative that is designed to set up community-based projects in diamond-producing chiefdoms with funding from the Diamond Area Community Development Fund, established in 2001. Efforts to contribute to peace and prosperity through community-based initiatives were also spearheaded in Kono with the formation of the Kono Peace Diamond Alliance, with the assistance of USAID.

36. The Government is also pursuing policies aimed at the improvement of the diamond-mining and diamond-marketing sectors. A DFID-sponsored diamond sector policy workshop took place on 5 and 6 March 2003, and addressed the key issues affecting the diamond-mining industry in Sierra Leone, the development and better enforcement of an appropriate legal and regulatory regime and the provision of a fair and efficient enabling business environment. The World Bank and the Government of Sierra Leone have recently concluded a comprehensive analytical study that makes important recommendations for the revival and development of the mining sector.

37. Effective implementation of new policies and strategies for the development of the diamond sector will remain a complex and challenging task, given the history of corruption and poor governance. The Government will have to demonstrate the necessary resolve to reform and regulate this sector. In order to enhance the Government's efforts in curbing illegal mining, UNAMSIL is examining the possibility of offering its assistance, using military observers, to determine the global positioning system coordinates of each of the licenced plots leased for artisanal mining.

D. Promoting human rights, reconciliation and justice

38. During the reporting period, UNAMSIL intensified its human rights monitoring and capacity-building activities. The Mission continues to monitor police stations, prisons and the administration of justice and to provide human rights training for the Sierra Leone police and RSLAF.

39. Extension of judicial coverage constitutes a priority for the Government, especially when the Sierra Leone police are to assume responsibility for law and order in the areas to be vacated by UNAMSIL. The reactivation of the system of justices of the peace by the Government to supplement the work of the magistrates is aimed at addressing the acute personnel constraints in the judicial system. About 70 of the 200 justices of the peace appointed last year completed a three-week intensive training programme jointly organized by the Government and UNDP on 31

January 2003. It is expected that these measures will facilitate the dispensation of justice.

40. The rehabilitation of prisons in various parts of the country is ongoing. The rehabilitation by UNDP of the prisons in Kambia, Makeni and Bo and the increase of prison officers and personnel to 1,140, from the current level of 790, are also under way. These efforts should be seen as an important element in the broader objective of strengthening the rule of law in Sierra Leone, and they require the continuing support and assistance of the international community.

41. The multiple adjournments in the trials of the 34 former West Side Boys, former RUF leader Foday Sankoh and other former RUF members, and their lack of defense counsel, have continued to be a source of serious concern. In January 2003, both cases were adjourned for the eighth time since being transferred to the High Court in April 2002. The failing health of Mr. Sankoh prompted UNAMSIL physicians to examine him last December. On the basis of the examination results, it was recommended that his cell conditions and medical treatments be improved. In this context, my Special Representative met with the Vice-President and encouraged the Government to implement these recommendations.

E. Protection of children

42. The situation of children in Sierra Leone continues to be of critical concern. The National Commission for War-Affected Children, on which the Office of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu, and UNAMSIL had been working with the Government, was inaugurated on 24 February by President Kabbah, during a visit by Mr. Otunnu to the country. The National Commission has received considerable support, including under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, for programmes for war-affected children, in particular street children. Also, during Mr. Otunnu's visit the Voice of Children, a unique radio project jointly created by the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and UNAMSIL, was launched on 25 February. The expansion of the Family Support Unit within the Sierra Leone police is also worth noting. The adoption of a comprehensive Child Rights Bill by Parliament and the reform of the juvenile justice system remain, however, urgent priorities.

43. Within all parts of UNAMSIL, there have been continuing efforts to mainstream protection of children. The training of peacekeeping personnel in the rights and protection of children has been expanded to include the monitoring and reporting of abuses against children.

F. HIV/AIDS

44. UNAMSIL has continued to provide information to its military and civilian personnel about the impact of HIV/AIDS, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1308 (2000). A number of UNAMSIL personnel participated in the training programmes aimed at imparting knowledge of HIV/AIDS issues to the members of the Mission and creating awareness through trained representatives.

G. Truth and Reconciliation Commission

45. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has continued to make progress in its work despite financial constraints. Assisted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNAMSIL and UNDP, the Commission made considerable progress in the areas of recruitment, management and statement-taking. A new Executive Secretary and other personnel of the secretariat have been appointed. On 17 February, the Commission opened its new office in Freetown.

46. The Commission had collected more than 3,500 statements as of mid-February. It is expected that up to 8,000 statements will be collected by 31 March, when the hearings phase will begin. In January 2003, the Commission carried out an assessment of the ongoing statement-taking exercise. The results were deemed to be promising, with regard to both the quality and the quantity of the statements collected, with some training provided by UNAMSIL. The Commission's strategy for its interaction with special target groups was also further refined.

47. UNAMSIL has also provided the Commission with logistic and technical support. This includes access to transit on UNAMSIL planes and vehicles and the provision of some communications equipment, air conditioners and office supplies, either on loan or on a cost-reimbursable basis. UNAMSIL's Public Information Section has been engaged in a vigorous campaign to raise awareness among the population regarding the activities of the Commission.

H. Special Court

48. During the period under review, the Special Court for Sierra Leone made significant progress in its operations. As noted in paragraph 5 above, on 10 March 2003 the Prosecutor announced the indictments of seven individuals for war crimes, crimes against humanity and violations of international humanitarian law. In early January, the Registry of the Special Court opened its permanent site in Freetown. The Office of the Prosecutor is expected to move to the new site soon. In addition, the Special Court has taken several steps to finalize its organizational structure and to prepare for the beginning of its proceedings. The Witnesses and Victims Support Unit has been established, and preparations are under way to create a defence support section, which will include both Sierra Leonean and international lawyers.

49. The UNAMSIL Human Rights Section has continued to share with the Special Court information it has collected from investigations into past human rights violations and to support the Court investigators in their fieldwork whenever necessary. Collaboration between UNICEF, child protection agencies and the Special Court has also continued.

50. UNAMSIL has been providing substantial security, logistic and technical support to the Special Court on a cost-reimbursable basis. The Mission granted the Court the use of its construction equipment at the Court's permanent site. It assisted the Court in relocating the communications system from the old to the new premises and in the establishment of an independent communications system for the Court at its new site. The UNAMSIL troops assigned to western Freetown have stationed infantry units near the new Court's premises and the Office of the Prosecutor, and have integrated support for the Court into the contingency plans of the rapid response force.

51. Furthermore, to enhance staff security, 24-hour VHF radio access has been established, with direct links to the UNAMSIL Joint Operations Centre and to the United Nations Field Security Office. A joint contingency plan is being developed by the Special Court to integrate emergency response actions with the Field Security Office and UNAMSIL. UNAMSIL continues to make available to the Court the use of its radio and press facilities. The UNAMSIL Public Information Section has stepped up consciousness-raising programmes on the activities of the Court.

VI. Humanitarian, recovery and development challenges

52. There is an emerging consensus among Sierra Leone's international partners on the need for a progressive shift from large-scale relief assistance in the country to recovery and development efforts, as the Government is making progress towards achieving the benchmarks outlined in the National Recovery Strategy. However, a new influx of Liberian refugees proves that Sierra Leone and the subregion continue to face major humanitarian challenges.

53. The renewal of fighting in Liberia has precipitated a new influx of refugees into Sierra Leone. As at 4 March more than 7,800 refugees had been registered crossing into Sierra Leone, but the total number is estimated at more than 9,000. More than 30 per cent of the refugees are arriving across the Mano River Bridge into Gendema, and another 30 per cent through Mano Kpende, but there are seven other principal crossing points. Staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are working in close collaboration with the security forces, RSLAF, the Sierra Leone police and UNAMSIL troops to ensure adequate screening of people as they stream over the border. To this end, an inter-agency team was mobilized to respond to the situation on the ground.

54. With UNAMSIL logistic support, refugees are being transported to the Zimmi way station, where immediate assistance is provided, and thereafter to more permanent camp facilities away from the border. Many refugees are, however, reluctant to move away from the border, awaiting family members or preferring to wait until hostilities have ceased. Currently, it appears that there are sufficient resources to cope with the situation, provided, however, there is no further deterioration and the influx does not increase.

55. At the same time, ongoing humanitarian operations in the country may need to be suspended in order to channel resources towards emergency response efforts for Liberian refugees. The civilian members of the families of fleeing AFL personnel (see para. 26 above) are also being taken care of by UNHCR at refugee camps and way stations, and their visits to the Mapeh camp, where AFL and LURD personnel are being interned, will be facilitated.

56. Between December 2002 and January 2003, more than 51,000 displaced Sierra Leoneans have returned to their places of origin, of whom approximately 13,500 have been formally resettled with humanitarian assistance. Following the completion of the resettlement programme for internally displaced persons, all camps for such persons in the provinces have now been closed. The completion of the resettlement programme for internally displaced persons is a significant landmark for Sierra Leone and lays the foundation for recovery at the district level. The challenge now is to build on this foundation and support ongoing recovery and reintegration initiatives. Freetown, however, faces a significant problem of

homelessness, as large numbers of internally displaced persons, provided with the option of transport from UNAMSIL and resettlement packages, decided to stay in the capital. Among those, some 4,000 persons continue to reside in the National Workshop Camp in downtown Freetown.

57. The UNHCR programme for the repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees from Guinea, Liberia and other countries in the subregion has continued. Small numbers of refugees from countries other than Guinea and Liberia have been transported by air. Road convoys have been operating on a weekly basis from Guinea. Repatriation from Liberia will be resumed shortly. Some 200,000 Sierra Leoneans have so far returned from asylum countries, of whom more than 124,000 benefited from individual assistance from UNHCR.

58. An aid-coordination committee, made up of senior Government ministers, key donors and representatives of non-governmental organizations, has been created to review and assess progress against benchmarks contained in the Consultative Group Framework for Peace, Recovery and Development, agreed in Paris last November. The first assessment indicates that progress has been made towards the benchmarks in a number of areas and that the Government is generally on track to meet the targets, notably in the economic and social sectors.

59. The United Nations country team, together with its partners, is supporting the Government, through the National Recovery Committee, in its efforts to achieve the benchmarks through short- and medium-term programmes of assistance. As already indicated, UNDP provides support aimed at achieving some of the benchmarks in the area of security reform and governance. UNICEF and UNDP provide support for the reintegration of adult and child ex-combatants. UNICEF assists with the rehabilitation of wells in order to increase access to safe drinking water and sanitation, while the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF provide support for immunization services, aimed at increasing the national immunization coverage. UNICEF and the World Bank rehabilitate primary schools and provide teaching materials. UNICEF also assists with complementary rapid education for children who have missed schooling because of the war. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations provides support for quality seed production and the rehabilitation of seed multiplication infrastructure, aimed at increasing rice production.

60. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continues to coordinate the provision of humanitarian assistance and leads the support for the resettlement of internally displaced persons. WHO, the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF and the World Bank support awareness programmes and policy formulation on HIV/AIDS. The World Bank provides support in the education, health and economic sectors. While the United Nations country team's short-term programmes are outlined in the 2003 relief and recovery appeal, the longer-term programme is presented in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, which provides a common operational framework for development activities for the period 2004-2007.

61. Economic recovery continued to accelerate during 2002. The principal factors in the expansion of the economy include the quickening pace of resettlement and rehabilitation activities, the freedom of movement of people and goods, the growing consumer and investor confidence and the dynamic growth of donor-financed imports. Production of minerals, agricultural commodities and manufactured goods,

as well as value added by commerce and transportation, all increased substantially, resulting in real growth in gross domestic product in 2002 estimated at close to 7 per cent. Exports rose by two thirds, largely due to an increase of about 64 per cent in diamonds exported via official channels.

62. Thanks mainly to the continuing large inflow of external assistance, imports climbed by about one third, and gross international reserves rose to $76 million in December 2002. The large expansion in the domestic supply of goods and services and the accumulation of international reserves led to an adjustment of the exchange rate. Together with generally sound fiscal and monetary policies, this pushed down the domestic price level by 4 per cent, further increasing real incomes. Despite the recent hike in oil prices, the prospects for a continued strong recovery in 2003 remain favourable, owing in part to the expectation that rutile exports will resume during the second half of 2003.

63. Sierra Leone's debt was also reduced in 2002, with debt relief obtained under the enhanced HIPC Initiative, as well as from the Paris Club. The country's debt service ratio was reduced from 88 per cent in 2001 to 9 per cent in 2002, freeing up considerable resources for poverty-reduction programmes. Sierra Leone should also become eligible for a second year of interim debt relief under the HIPC Initiative in 2003.

64. Progress was also made in advancing key institutional and structural reforms aimed at promoting private sector growth and sustaining high rates of economic growth, such as the establishment of the National Privatization Commission and the National Revenue Authority.

VII. Regional aspects

65. As the conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia continue, Sierra Leone's peace consolidation efforts are under way in a highly unstable regional environment. While the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire does not have a direct and immediate impact on Sierra Leone, the recent upsurge of fighting in the border counties of Liberia has had serious implications for the security and stability of Sierra Leone.

66. On 28 February 2003, the International Contact Group on Liberia held its second working session at United Nations Headquarters in New York. It urged the Government of Liberia and LURD to enter immediately and without preconditions into negotiations on a ceasefire, as they had committed to do. It also urged both parties to accept Mali as mediator on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The Contact Group concluded that the conditions for free and fair elections did not exist at present, and urged the Government of Liberia to create such conditions, including a ceasefire, security, national reconciliation, electoral reforms and respect for human rights, before the elections are held.

67. A mediation process is now scheduled to begin in Bamako, Mali, on 10 March, with President Touré serving as mediator on behalf of ECOWAS. I trust that both parties will make full use of this opportunity to ensure that a way forward is found to bring the protracted conflict in Liberia to an end so that peace and security can be restored to the country and to the wider Mano River Union subregion.

VIII. Financial aspects

68. The General Assembly, by its resolution 56/251 B of 27 June 2002, appropriated $669.5 million for the maintenance of UNAMSIL for the period from 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003. I have also submitted a detailed budget amounting to $520.1 million for the maintenance of the Mission for the 2003-2004 financial period, which is currently before the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the General Assembly for oversight and legislative review and consideration. Therefore, should the Security Council approve my recommendation set out in paragraph 76 below regarding the extension of the mandate of UNAMSIL, the cost of the operation and maintenance of the Mission during the extension period will be limited to resources approved by the General Assembly.

69. As at 31 January 2003, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNAMSIL amounted to $340.1 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $2.2 billion.

IX. Observations

70. My fifteenth report on UNAMSIL presented detailed proposals for the drawdown of the Mission, which is guided by progress in the implementation of the key security benchmark: building up the capacity of the Sierra Leone police and army. Developments over recent months have proved the prudence of pursuing a gradual drawdown of the Mission consistent with progress made in achieving this benchmark. While the efforts of those concerned have gone a long way towards enhancing the capacity and training of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces and of the Sierra Leone police, the first serious challenges posed recently to both security institutions have exposed the existence of considerable shortcomings. It is widely acknowledged that the presence of UNAMSIL gave the general public the confidence that prevented a deterioration of the situation. Clearly, additional efforts will be needed to enhance the capacity of the security sector in Sierra Leone.

71. These developments should not be interpreted to mean that the generally positive security trends in Sierra Leone have suffered a fundamental reversal. Nonetheless, it should be noted that a Government capacity to maintain internal and external security without any assistance from UNAMSIL has yet to be attained. Therefore, a cautious approach to the pace of the drawdown is fully justifiable. In this connection, much still needs to be done to strengthen the presence of the Sierra Leone police in the areas being vacated by UNAMSIL. Of particular importance are the efforts to mobilize the requisite equipment and logistical support for such a deployment, which is lagging behind. I urge the Government and its partners to address on an urgent basis the logistical and infrastructural needs of both the police and RSLAF.

72. At the same time, the continued existence of Civil Defence Force structures is also a source of concern, in spite of the commitment made earlier by the Government to complete its disbandment by the end of January 2003. The existence of the Civil Defence Force structures may undermine not only the credibility of the demobilization process, but also the long-term stability of the country. It may not be a coincidence that in the areas dominated by ex-Civil Defence Force members there

is considerable resistance to full deployment of the Sierra Leone police and armed forces.

73. The commencement of indictments by the Special Court also carries with it considerable security challenges. In this connection, it is important to ensure that the Sierra Leone police and prison authorities have the requisite capacity to ensure secure custody of those apprehended. In addition, there is a need for close coordination between the Special Court and UNAMSIL in the context of the possible impact of the indictments on the overall security situation in the country.

74. A particular challenge for Sierra Leone society and the Government is how to manage the expectations of the country's young people, and in particular to prevent them from feeling a sense of exclusion. Solutions to these issues are complex and will require time, resources and actions ranging from promoting economic revival and education to skills training. An open and sustained dialogue with the young people will also be crucial. I invite the Government and its partners to continue to engage with youth groups and their leaders to better understand and respond to their aspirations.

75. I note with satisfaction further progress made by the Government to restore its effective control over diamond mining, which is an area of vital importance for the future of the country. It is important for the Government — in cooperation with its international partners — to further step up its efforts to fight illegal diamond mining and trade. It is also gratifying that the Government continues to make progress with the programme offering reintegration opportunities to registered ex-combatants; several thousand of them have been able to take advantage of the programme since my sixteenth report. However, the remaining caseload is still considerable. In this context, the United Nations welcomes the intention of the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration and donors to complete the reintegration programme by the end of 2003, and calls upon the Sierra Leone partners, whose past efforts in this area were highly commendable, to provide additional contributions to bridge the existing financial shortfall.

76. Given the various internal and external developments in Sierra Leone, I wish to confirm the need for the gradual continued drawdown of UNAMSIL, as proposed in my fifteenth report. I recommend, further, that the Security Council approve the proposals set out in paragraphs 11 to 14 above relating to the drawdown. Accordingly, it is my intention to provide detailed recommendations concerning the planning and implementation of the remaining steps of phases 3 and 4 of the drawdown process in my reports to the Security Council to be submitted before the end of 2003.

77. In these circumstances, I would like to recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNAMSIL for a further period of six months, until 30 September 2003, in order to enable the Mission to continue its implementation.

78. The recent deterioration of the situation in Liberia continues to be worrying. As has often been stated, the security and stability of Sierra Leone cannot be fully ensured while the conflict in Liberia persists. So far, Sierra Leone has been able to cope with the influx of refugees through the immediate intervention of UNHCR, with logistic assistance from UNAMSIL. However, if a greater influx of refugees were to result from the continuing conflict in Liberia, a humanitarian emergency could arise.

79. I therefore reiterate my appeal to the international community to engage constructively in Liberia in order to bring the conflict to an early end. It has been acknowledged that the International Contact Group on Liberia provides the best forum for the international community to find a comprehensive solution to the country's crisis, in addition to contributing to improved relations among the countries of the Mano River Union. The reported involvement of former armed elements from both Liberia and Sierra Leone in the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire is also cause for alarm because of its potential for further regional destabilization.

80. Lastly, I wish to express my appreciation to the Security Council and troop- and police-contributing countries, as well as to ECOWAS and donors, for their continued support for UNAMSIL. I also commend my Special Representative and all UNAMSIL military and civilian personnel for the progress made during the reporting period.

Annex

United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone: contributions as at 20 March 2003

Authorized military strength: 15,000 (up to 260 military observers)

	Military observers	*Staff officers*	*Troops*	*Sector headquarters staff*	*Total*
Bangladesh	15	18	2 203	65	2 301
Bolivia	6				6
Canada	5				5
China	6				6
Croatia	10				10
Czech Republic	5				5
Denmark	2				2
Egypt	10				10
Gambia	15				15
Germany			16		16
Ghana	7	12	846	1	866
Guinea	12	5	776		793
Indonesia	10				10
Jordan	10	2	120		132
Kenya	12	13	994		1 019
Kyrgyzstan	2				2
Malaysia	10				10
Mali	7				7
Nepal	10	4	798		812
New Zealand	2				2
Nigeria	9	16	3 095	58	3 178
Pakistan	15	18	3 769	47	3 849
Russian Federation	13	4	110		127
Slovakia	2				2
Sweden	3				3
United Republic of Tanzania	12				12
Thailand	5		5		10
Ukraine	5	5	630		640
United Kingdom	15	7			22
Uruguay	11				11
Zambia	10	6	821	1	838
Total	**256**	**115**	**14 178**	**172**	**14 721**

Force Commander: Kenya; Deputy Force Commander/Chief Military Observer: Pakistan
Authorized strength of civilian police: 170

Civilian police: Bangladesh: 5; Canada: 7; Cameroon: 1; Gambia: 1; Ghana: 3; India: 1; Jordan: 5; Kenya: 5; Malaysia: 5; Nepal: 8; Niger: 2; Nigeria: 2; Norway: 3; Russia: 3; Senegal: 1; Sri Lanka: 5; Sweden: 2; United Republic of Tanzania: 5
Total: 64.

UNAMSIL
Deployment as of March 2003
National capital
Provincial capital
Town, village
International boundary
Provincial boundary
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
GUINEA
LIBERIA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
NORTHERN
SIERRA LEONE
EASTERN
SOUTHERN
Freetown
Makeni
Kenema
Bo
Kabala
Magburaka
Port Loko
Lunsar
Rokel Bridge
Waterloo
Rotifunk
Moyamba
Mile 91
Masiaka
Magbuntoso
Goderich
Wellington
Hastings
Kambia
Rokupr
Forecariah
Fandor
Mamou
Faranah
Medina Oula
Banian
Bambaya
Yombiro
Bendou Bodou
Kurubonla
Kamakwie
Kamalu
Batkanu
Mateboi
Pendembu
Bumbuna
Bendugu
Yomadu
Yengema
Kayima
Tefeya
Masingbi
Tongo
Panguma
Daru
Segbwema
Kailahun
Koidu Sefadu
Kondembu
Sumbuya
Gbangbatok
Sembehun
Sherbro
Bonthe
Pujehun
Zimmi
Kongo
Bendaja
Bopolu
Bomi Hills
Robertsport
Kle
Bong
Yele
Tunge
Mongeri
Taiama
Njala
Mano
Jct
Gorahun
Potoru
Tokpombu
Joru
Mano
Nitti
Kpetewoma
Moseneh
Sierromco
Bumpeh
Taonzo
Lago
Yoni
Tolobo
Gbinti
Mamuka
Babunda
Ribia
Lofa
Mano
Sumbuya
Matru
Kpetewoma
Nitti